



## THE INFORMED READER

Insights and Items of Interest From Other Sources

### ENVIRONMENT

## How Insurers Can Help Reduce Warming Risks

STANFORD ENVIRONMENTAL LAW JOURNAL—VOL 26A

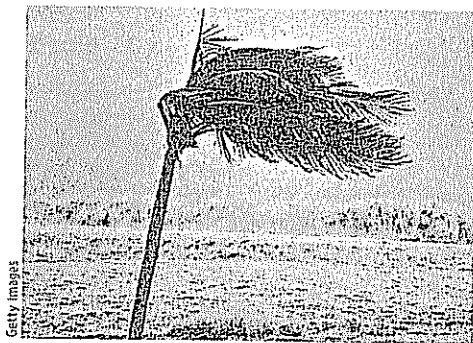
**I**NSURERS are likely to soon take a leadership role in reducing the risks of climate change as companies become more liable for damage related to it.

The authors of a study jointly published by the Stanford Environmental Law Journal and the Stanford Journal of International Law sketch out several ways that companies who disproportionately contribute to global warming could be held responsible for its damage as the science of global warming becomes clearer.

The most common example is owners of property damaged by a warmer world's extreme weather suing companies that disproportionately emitted greenhouse gases. As well as paying out on insurance covering such liability claims, insurers will have to pay for several kinds of damage related to global warming, the authors say. They'll have to pay for car crashes on wet roads and ski resorts that insure themselves against warm winters short on snow.

"The insurance industry, perhaps more than any other institution, has the power to set the stage for enduring and significant contributions to solving the problem of global climate change," say environmental consultant Christina Ross, government scientist Evan Mills and environmental-law expert Sean B. Hecht.

They find that the safest way for insurers to



lower their clients' risk is to have them lower their energy use. Other ways to reduce global warming, or to adapt to it, might themselves increase the risk of liability. For instance, companies that try to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide they pump into the atmosphere by storing the gas in the sea might be held liable if the gas subsequently leaks and causes environmental damage.

Beyond that, insurers should ask their clients for more information about the companies' greenhouse-gas emissions and exposure to damage related to climate change, encouraging the companies to think about the problem more systematically.

### ADOLESCENCE

## Why Do Teens Act That Way? Because They Have No Choice

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY—MAY 29

By placing more and more restrictions on teens, society is harmfully infantilizing a large number of people perfectly capable of behaving like adults, says psychologist Robert Epstein.

In an interview with Psychology Today, Dr. Epstein says the questionnaires he gave to teens and adults—meant to measure 14 areas of competence, such as interpersonal skills, handling responsibility and leadership—showed teens were as competent or nearly as competent as adults. Adults consistently underestimated teens' scores. He says longstanding data show raw intelligence peaks around the age of 15.

So where does the stereotype of the moody, sullen, sexually irresponsible and financially incompetent adolescent come from? Dr. Epstein says most adults would behave that way, too, if they had no responsibilities, no rights, and money to spend. Today's schooling and child-labor laws worked well in the late 19th century, when factories brutally exploited young workers, and a lifetime of education had to be packed into the start of life. A century later, the laws serve only to divorce teens from the adult world.

"They are free to spend, to be disrespectful, to stay out all night, to have sex and take drugs," says Dr. Epstein. "But they're not free to join the adult world, and that's what needs to change."

Parents who want to give their children "responsibility tied to significant rights" have few ways to do it. States have been increasing restrictions on teens since the 1960s.

Dr. Epstein recommends giving teens more options, privileges and responsibilities. He believes

we should see schooling as a lifetime project, rather than something only for the young. He would allow some teens to work and set up businesses while still in school. He recommends establishing tests that teens could take to prove they're competent to assume responsibilities like owning property or running a business, the way they can now if they want a driver's license.

### RELIEF

## Cash Grants Replace Goods To Aid Some of World's Poor

NEWSWEEK INTERNATIONAL—JUNE 11

Several aid agencies are hoping cash will be a more efficient form of aid than blankets, water, building materials, food and medicine.

Pilot programs last year delivered cash via special mobile ATM machines or local banks to 100,000 aid recipients in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Ethiopia and represented about 10% of the \$3.2 billion spent on international food aid. Cash costs half as much to deliver as traditional aid, easily bypasses corrupt middlemen and doesn't disrupt local farming the way food shipments do.

Cash works best in areas with functioning markets, rather than places cut off by, say, a flood. It appeals to rich and poor alike, so agencies are finding sophisticated ways to ensure it goes only to those in need. The Red Cross uses retinal scanners to identify recipients.

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